

CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method of collecting and processing incidents observed by witnesses comprising the steps of:

receiving into a computer system an incident report directly from a witness who observed an incident committed by an offender; prompting the witness to provide certain types of information about the incident;

prompting the witness to identify other witnesses, wherein a central computer attempts to contact the other witnesses via a communications network to request further information about an incident;

selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent, wherein the authority is selected based at least in part on information provided by the witness and wherein the authority is automatically selected by the computer system based on information entered into the incident report by the witness; and sending the incident report to the authority so that the authority can respond to the incident report.

2. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, the incident being selected from the group consisting of a criminal act, a legal violation, a sale of a defective product, and a rendering of unsatisfactory service.

3. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of prompting the witness to enter into the incident report identification information identifying the offender.

4. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of receiving additional identification information identifying the offender and adding the additional identification information to the incident report.

5. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 4, the additional information being obtained by searching files accessible by the computer system based on the identification information entered by the witness.

6. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 4, the additional information being obtained by receiving the additional information from the authority based on the information entered by the witness.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the authority is an agency selected from the group consisting of a local police department, a local prosecutors office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the authority is a governmental agency rather than an individual agent representing the agency.

9. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of receiving into the computer system an action report from the authority explaining the action the authority took in response to the incident report.

10. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 9, further including the step of storing the action report along with the incident report in a file accessible by the computer system.

11. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the incident reports from a plurality of different witnesses are received in the computer system.

12. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 11, further including the step of storing the incident reports in a searchable database; and providing a warning system that alerts users to certain dangerous conditions based on incident reports.

13. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 12, further including the step of permitting persons to access the searchable database to view the incident reports.

14. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 13, further including the step of receiving additional incident information from the persons that access the searchable database and adding the additional incident information to the incident reports to assist the authorities.

15. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 14, further including the step of sending the additional identification information to the witness.

16. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 15, further including the step of prompting the witness to update the incident report based on the additional identification information.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method of collecting and processing incidents observed by witnesses comprising the steps of:

receiving into a computer system an incident report directly from a witness who observed an incident committed by an offender; prompting the witness to enter certain types of information about the incident into the computer system, the information including identification information identifying the offender;

prompting the witness to identify other witnesses, wherein a central computer attempts to contact the other witnesses via a communications network to request further information about an incident;

selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent, wherein the authority is selected based at least in part on information entered by the witness and wherein the authority is selected by the computer system based on information entered into the incident report by the witness; and

sending the incident report to the authority so that the authority can respond to the incident report.

18. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 17, wherein the authority is a governmental agency rather than an individual agent representing the agency.

19. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 17, further including the steps of receiving an action report from the authority explaining what action was taken in response to the incident report and allowing the witness to view the action report.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method of collecting and processing incidents observed by witnesses comprising the steps of:

receiving into a computer system an incident report directly from a witness who observed an incident committed by an offender, wherein the witness does not know to whom the incident report should be sent;

prompting the witness to enter certain types of information about the incident into the computer system, the information including identification information identifying the offender;

prompting the witness to identify other witnesses, wherein a central computer attempts to contact the other witnesses via a communications network to request further information about an incident;

selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent, wherein the authority is selected by the computer system based at least in part on information entered by the witness;

sending the incident report to the authority so that the authority can respond to the incident report;

providing a warning system that alerts users to certain dangerous conditions based on incident reports;

receiving an action report from the authority explaining what action was taken in response to the incident report; and

storing the action report in a searchable database.